



# TWO TO GO!



*TrailerBoat* editor Kevin Poulter travelled to the Murray River port of Echuca to put Rolco's skiboats Evolution and Phoenix models through their paces

**E**chuca is a mecca for skiboats, evidenced by the great numbers of boats towed on highways from Sydney and Melbourne to this Murray River port, every available weekend or holiday.

Fortunately when the ski boat owner arrives, there's plenty of facilities and a well-watered, broad Murray River to enjoy. Even when the meandering giant Murray is bustling with all manner of floating craft, with a little courtesy

- giving the rest of the boaters a chance - there's room for all. A great place to test two of Rolco's finest, under the magnificent umbrella of grand red gums.

We tested Rolco's top of the range Evolution, equipped with almost every conceivable extra and the Phoenix, Rolco's entry-level, fun machine.

Rolco boats are designed and manufactured in Australia, particularly for the waterskiing and wakeboarding enthusiasts. By manufacturing all their

parts in-house and selling direct, Rolco achieve excellent economy in their boats.

The fun began with launching the Phoenix, with all passengers remaining dry on board during the launching, followed by the Evolution easily drifting away from the trailer toward the middle of the Murray - too easy! Then a quick push on the starter button and the V8 brute leaps into life, despite not being used for days.

You might expect a loud burble from

the V8, but Rolco reckon that a good muffler saves occupant's headaches and complaints from the residents, so there's ample sound-proofing. This tames the big Gen III V8 to a discreet burble-burble at low speeds, developing to a smooth purr that only a big American donk can produce.

Conversations don't require yelling as the noise level is very modest indeed. Not every boat brand on the Murray shares this philosophy, with some announcing their loud presence a long distance away, but I was impressed with the smooth, quiet power of the Rolco-installed V8. In fact the installation

package ensures the ride is quieter than many outboards. The bonus is Rolco claim super fuel economy.

#### **I FEEL THE NEED FOR SPEED**

The more you travel at speed in a boat, the more you crave coming back for more. With such a wide river, at ski







speed around 40kmh, it's not difficult to keep clear of snags, provided you note any above-water evidence and mentally project its likely course under the surface. A change in the water's surface colour or waves near the bank also hints at shallows, again easily avoided.

Both the Phoenix and the Evolution have a minimum wash, with a mirror-image pattern, flat and smooth for skiers, and a larger wash at lower speeds for wakeboarding. This is principally due to the low vee angle of their hulls, confirmed by watching the resulting wake in the observer's seat. This especially suits skiers and all the fishermen we passed at speed, relaxing with their lines.

Power from the V8 comes on smoothly, with no exertion. The car-style foot throttle effortlessly converted to power and the boats sported controlled predictability. This included remarkably

relaxed, stable tight turns, with not a hint of skittishness, assisted by the brass centre turn fins. The Evolution has three fins and the Phoenix two. Each Rolco has a custom steering wheel and legroom to suit any drivers, with adjustable seat rails.

We'll look at the Evolution in more detail, as it had the most options, plus the Phoenix is similar. The low raked profile aids low wind resistance and looks super-cool to speed lovers. Despite the close proximity to the water, during a speed burst, none of the occupants got wet. With a WOT of 45mph, or 50mph for the Phoenix, power is more than enough for inland rivers and lakes.

### GEN III HEART

The Evolution was fitted with a Gen III V8, produced for Chev trucks, so there's plenty of exhilarating pure grunt torque down low, assisted by the fuel injection. Rolco estimate fuel economy can be in the order of less than 10lt/h.

Construction is solid fibreglass, with F17 hardwood bearer spines and marine ply floor, covered in carpet. An optional bank of stereo speakers was attached to the Evolution tower, powered by a Clarion audio system. The sound quality is good and the volume exceeds the engine's best efforts, as the music announces the arrival of this fun boat.

Heavy duty plush cut pile marine

carpet is throughout, including in storage lockers. The vehicle-style upholstery is as good as it gets. Vinyl is hot on a sunny day, so Rolco utilise the same crushed velour fabric used in vehicles like Ford's XR6 and XR8 vehicles, with contrasting patterned inserts. This is very comfortable and offers excellent resistance to wear and tear. As Rolco boats are made to order, a wide range of fabric colours are available, in fact the entire décor inside and out is easily ordered to meet individual taste and requirements.

The observer's seat is generous enough to seat two comfortably and we were able to navigate to the rear seating at speed, with the skipole providing excellent

**"THE EVOLUTION WAS FITTED WITH A GEN III V8, PRODUCED FOR CHEV TRUCKS, SO THERE'S PLENTY OF EXHILARATING PURE GRUNT TORQUE DOWN LOW, ASSISTED BY THE FUEL INJECTION"**



Top: At the heart of the matter is the fuel-injected GEN III V8, built for Chev trucks, and certainly at home in the Evolution and Phoenix. Above: Evolution's moulded dash has a retro look with clean analogue guages, sports wheel and audio system.

Opposite, far right: The stylish and plush engine cover of the Evolution sporting no less than four stainless steel cupholders. Opposite main: The tricked-up Evolution has a top speed of 45mph.





## HIGHS

- ✓ V8 Power to spare
- ✓ Driving position and controls
- ✓ Instruments are now even better
- ✓ Features like storage ideas throughout
- ✓ Finish
- ✓ Stability
- ✓ Value
- ✓ With the Phoenix starting at just \$29,990, there's great value in a Rolco

## LOWS

- ✗ The observer's drop floor is excellent but compact when a centre skipole is installed

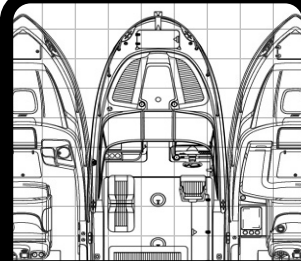
support when needed.

Rolco have utilised almost all available space for storage, right down to drinkholders for the driver and observer. In fact there are no less than seven stainless steel drinkholders, large enough for stubbyholders, for big thirsts as the crew cruise in comfort. A nice touch

is the storage area for the driver's keys, mobile phone or other items. Skis and all the kit a family carry are accommodated in the array of storage bays. At the rear, the huge carpeted ski locker's twin doors open with gas struts - a nifty feature. There's plenty of space to store a couple of skis or wakeboards and associated ropes plus gear. Down each side there's pockets and a carpeted storage behind the observer's seat.

But of all the accessories, it's the new wide-angle rear vision mirror that Lloyd from Rolco finds the most useful. The magnificent panorama of the rear view offered by this mirror is the best backup to the observer and keeps the driver aware of the skier's safety even better and quicker than the observer's updates.

The boats are licensed for seven people, with not too squeezey room on the padded seats. A generous carpeted boarding platform at the rear is spacious enough to stand, sit and launch from, with well placed grabrails. Exiting from the front near-flat bow deck to the shore is a breeze too.



## HOW MUCH?

Price as tested: ...\$43,020 Phoenix w/ options; Evolution \$53,620 w/ options

Engine fitted: ..... Rolco Gen III 350hp Soft Clutch

Priced from: \$29,990 Phoenix w/ trailer; 35,990 Evolution w/ trailer

## GENERAL

Material: ..... Fibreglass

Length overall: ..... 20ft (6.1m)

Beam: ..... 2.1m

Weight: ...Phoenix - 1450kg on trailer; Evolution - 1600kg on trailer

## CAPACITIES

Fuel: 140lt (Evolution); 155lt (Phoenix)

People: ..... 7

## ENGINE

Make/model: ..... GEN III 350hp

Type: ..... V8 petrol w/ multiport fuel injection (MPI)

Weight: ..... 300kg

Rated HP: ..... 350

Displacement: ..... 5.3lt

Gearbox: ..... Soft Clutch

Propeller: ..... L12

x 14in four-blade (Phoenix); L13 x 12in four-blade (Evolution)

## SUPPLIED BY

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**Clockwise from top left:**  
The Evolution's V8 donk;  
The nifty gas-strut lifting rear storage compartment of the Evolution; The cheaper Phoenix produces a faster WOT of 50mph.

ROLCO PHOENIX/EVOLUTION